



Native Goodies

By Joquita Burka

South Carolina farmers produce an amazing array of fresh, delicious products. And South Carolina cooks have found some incredible ways to turn these native ingredients into some best-you-ever-tasted dishes.»

PECANS

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: The pecan is the only major nut tree that grows naturally in North America. Pecans are a big favorite around here. We like them baked, roasted and salted. But arguably one of the best ways is in the sweet pecan pies that seem to always grace our holiday tables.

Pecan Pie

- 2 unbaked pie shells
- ½ c. butter
- ½ c. sugar
- ¾ c. white corn syrup
- ¼ c. maple syrup
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 t. vanilla
- 2 c. chopped pecans



Cream butter and sugar until light. Stir in syrups. Add beaten eggs and vanilla and mix well. Add nuts and pour into two unbaked pie shells. Bake at 325° F for one hour.

From Golden Kernel Pecan Co., Cameron, SC



PEACHES

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: South Carolina is the second (only to California) largest producer of peaches in the country.

Sweet, juicy and dripping with flavor, peaches are, for many, the true mark of summer. In fact, no summer should pass without the experience of sitting on the front porch with friends, watching the fireflies blinking on and off while polishing off fresh, hot peach cobbler topped with vanilla ice cream. That's livin'.

Peach Cobbler

½ c. unsalted butter, melted

1 c. all-purpose flour

1½ c. sugar (or to taste)

3 t. baking powder

Pinch of salt

1 c. milk

4 c. peeled, pitted and thinly sliced fresh peaches (5-6 medium peaches)

1 T. fresh lemon juice



Preheat oven to 375° F.

Pour the melted butter into a 13" x 9" x 2" baking dish. In a medium bowl, combine flour, 1 c. of the sugar, baking powder and salt, and mix well. Stir in the milk, mixing until just combined. Pour this batter over the butter but do not stir them together.

In a small saucepan, combine the peaches, lemon juice and remaining ½ c. of sugar, and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Pour the peaches over the batter but do not stir them together. Sprinkle with cinnamon or nutmeg if desired.

Bake in the oven for 40-45 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Serve warm or cold.

From Dori Sanders' Country Cooking (You'll find author Dori Sanders at her family's peach stand in Filbert, SC.)

GRITS

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: Grits (not the same as what most people call "hominy") are made from corn that has been ground until it is about the same consistency as coarse sand.

Most self-respecting South Carolinians would never eat "instant" or "quick" grits—for good reason. The choice of many chefs is Anson Mills Antebellum Coarse Corn Grits (ansonmills.com). A product of heirloom seed corn and modern organic farming, these are so delicious you'll understand why they are on the menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner around here.

Rhett House Inn Southern Grits

1 c. coarse stone-ground grits

4 c. water

1-4 T. chicken base paste (or chicken bouillon to taste)

1-4 T. butter



Combine all ingredients. Cook over low heat for two hours, stirring occasionally. Cover and put in refrigerator overnight. The next morning resume cooking, adding milk or half & half as needed. Cook over low heat for about an hour.

From Rhett House Inn, Beaufort, SC



IT'S OFFICIAL!

"Whereas, throughout its history, the South has relished its grits, making them a symbol of its diet, its customs, its humor, and its hospitality...and whereas, grits has been a part of the life of every South Carolinian of whatever race, background, gender, and income; and whereas, grits could very well play a vital role in the future of not only this State, but also the world, if as *The Charleston News and Courier* proclaimed in 1952: 'An inexpensive, simple, and thoroughly digestible food, [grits] should be made popular throughout the world. Given enough of it, the inhabitants of planet Earth would have nothing to fight about. A man full of [grits] is a man of peace.' Now therefore, be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina: The official state food is grits." 1976 SC House Bill 4806

RICE

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: Rice arrived in Charleston harbor around 1685 and became the area's main cash crop until the end of the Civil War, finally disappearing from the state completely by the 20th century.

However, heirloom seeds and dedicated growers have brought back this flavorful, aromatic rice, known as Carolina Gold. Carolina Plantation Rice grows the true "Carolina Gold" rice at Plumfield Plantation along the Great Pee Dee River outside Darlington, SC.

Carolina Gold Rice Pudding

1 c. Carolina Gold Rice

7 c. whole milk

1 vanilla bean (or extract to taste)

1 c. sugar

3 egg yolks

2 T. confectioner's sugar

Cinnamon stick



Bring a quart of water to boil with confectioner's sugar. Blanch rice for about 5 minutes. Drain and rinse rice. Combine blanched rice with milk, vanilla, sugar and cinnamon stick. Bring to a simmer. Cook until rice is very tender, then remove from heat and let set for 5 minutes. Remove cinnamon stick. Whisk egg yolks into the milk and rice mixture. Pour into a casserole dish, cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving. May also be served at room temperature.

From Chef Mike Lata of FIG, Charleston, SC